



# ANNUAL REPORT

2021

BRECKSVILLE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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# Annual Report for 2021

## Church Statistics

### I. Baptisms - 1

10-17-2021 Mara Annabel Oliver (Julie & Dave Bernard's granddaughter)

### II. Deaths - 2

01-21-2021 Leoramae "Lee" Sanderson

10-21-2021 Max Roha

### III. New Members - 4

01-10-2021 Allison Colbert

03-07-2021 Annette & Fred Pedersen

10-17-2021 Mara Annabel Oliver

Total Members as of 3/1/2021 180 (prior to Breeze)

Total Members as of 3/1/2022 146

## From Pastor Allan

The year 2021 began much as 2020 ended: during a pandemic. But by springtime the numbers had come down, the vaccine was readily and freely available, and it seemed safe to start talking about re-opening the church.

As we prepared to re-open, we realized that our online presence had been very beneficial. It had enabled us to stay connected with our parishioners who were shut-in, and with those who were temporarily elsewhere, like our snowbirds down in Florida. Moreover, because the pandemic continued and personal safety was paramount for the church, it seemed a good idea to allow people to make individual decisions about their comfort level with returning to group activities.

It turned out for various technical reasons that Zoom was not a good medium for continuing our broadcasts. With generous assistance from congregation members past and present, a new video system was installed that would allow us to broadcast and record our services from the sanctuary. This was installed in record time by our Communications Ministry, to whom great thanks are due.

We began meeting again in our new dual format of in-person and online. While it was great to be able to get together in person again for those who ventured into the sanctuary, it quickly became apparent that the intimacy and the social time that had been afforded us as a group on Zoom was missing from the new system on YouTube Live.

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# Annual Report for 2021

## **From Pastor Allan (continued)**

We never really figured out how to recover that sense of connection for our online watchers. The broadcast became less interactive and more one-way communication. I have no answer of how to fix this, but it is something to keep in mind going forward.

One thing that we didn't do when we re-opened was to make a clear point at which we would have to close again. Later in the year we had over 20,000 daily new cases in Ohio for a few weeks. Had we had those numbers when the decision to re-open was made, we may not have made the decision to re-open. So far, I think largely because of the high vaccination rate within the congregation, and because of everyone's efforts to be responsible, and perhaps with a bit of luck, we made it through all right.

One of the lessons we should take going forward and in future is that, once the decision has been made to re-open, there is considerable momentum to stay open no matter what the circumstances. We never seriously and formally revisited our decision as external circumstances changed. No bad consequences resulted from this failure, and had we consulted widely and seriously, we might have come to the same decision to remain open, but nevertheless, we should have gone through a process when the numbers were so high. That is largely my fault and I apologize for that.

Towards the end of the year, we got the great news that the Search Committee was ready to propose a candidate for the position of Permanent Pastor. The Rev. John King preached for the call on January 9th, 2022 and was called by the congregation to be the new pastor, beginning February 1st, 2022.

With great thanksgiving to God for seeing us through a difficult year, and for capping it off with great news of a new start for the church with a new minister so early in 2022, we look forward to seeing what God has in store of us in the year to come. I thank God for the support and ministry of the congregation of Brecksville United Church of Christ, and I pray that the church and its people will have a glorious future.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Allan C. Lane

## From The Moderator

Submitted by Heidi Spangler

Well, it's been quite a year at BUCC, as we navigated the highs and lows of an unprecedented time. But 2021 was a year of new ideas and growth for all of us and it's time to celebrate them.

In February, we moved to a more efficient system for maintaining our directory and Sunday volunteer services. We subscribed to an online program called Breeze. Each member of BUCC can create their own account, see their volunteer history, track their annual giving, and stay up to date on upcoming events and opportunities. The system was put in place to create efficiencies for the annual report and BUCC directory and also allows members to sign up for service roles online. For those who haven't gotten familiar with the system yet, the Membership Ministry will be offering trainings in 2022 so stay tuned!

In March, we partnered with the students at Tri-C and successfully launched our first ever Friday Fish Meal. Members of BUCC enjoyed participating in the event, which raised over \$2,500 for BUCC. Members also purchased over 40 meals that were donated to St. Augustine Hunger Center.

In May, we successfully re-opened for in-person worship thanks to the hard work of the Spiritual Life and Communications & Outreach Ministries. We moved off Zoom and are now live streaming our services on our own YouTube channel.

In November, we kicked off Stewardship Sunday with the Rooted in Love Fest and re-started our fellowship time in Pilgrim Hall.

And in December, we re-started our Holiday Last Minute Mart. We had 18 vendors in Pilgrim Hall and raised \$659 for The Refugee Response.

We also continued to stay up to date on the changes in Brecksville. We were approached by a developer about purchasing our rental house as part of their proposal and re-development plans. We left the discussion open for consideration based on whether their RFP was accepted by the city. After discussions with Mayor Hruby, we were told that no proposals were chosen so there was no need for further negotiations on the house. This may come up again in 2022 as the City of Brecksville puts out new requests for development proposals.

In 2022, we will welcome a new Settled Pastor and say goodbye with gratitude to Allan Lane. Allan accepted the role of interim under normal circumstances and like all of us, had to figure out how to be a part of a church when we could not be together in-person. He helped us make it work and I am thankful that he was there to guide us. Wishing all of you an amazing 2022. Better days ahead!

# Annual Report for 2021

## Music

Submitted by David Debick, Director of Music

Like much of 2020, BUCC's adult and children's choirs were put on hold because of the Covid pandemic. From January-May, the church utilized Zoom for Sunday services. Words for the chosen hymns were printed in the online bulletin. In June, our Communications and Outreach team helped BUCC transition from Zoom to streaming services on YouTube. Four cameras were positioned in the choir loft and microphones placed strategically in the sanctuary to pick up the service proceedings. We have continued this practice through the end of 2021.

Because Covid numbers ebbed considerably over the summer months, we decided to gather the choir again in September, with masks and distancing. Kate Klonowski and Bridget Sproul brought to our attention the availability of special singers' masks that were being used by the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus. 15 of these were purchased by Spiritual Life at a reasonable cost. Allison Colbert joined the choir and added a strong voice to our alto section. Over the course of many months, Craig Ramsey has shared his prodigious musical gifts on guitar, percussion, and voice.

On October 10, the Joyful Noise Duet - Gabby and Giuliana Gagliano - delivered an energetic presentation of "*I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me*", a traditional African American spiritual. At the beginning of November, the seasonal choir began rehearsing four holiday anthems - including H. W. Howard's "*Ave Maria*" - in lieu of a full cantata. Unfortunately, the omicron variant began spreading quite rapidly, and the choir was able to present only three of these pieces before suspending its rehearsals indefinitely.

Let me take this opportunity to thank everyone for their generous contributions of time and talent to our music ministry. Our choir members, our instrumentalists, our children: you are all vital to BUCC's worship experiences. My prayer is that omicron and its many mutations will recede over the coming weeks and months, and that we can return to the relative freedom we enjoyed last fall.

## Christian Education

Submitted By Anne Melfo

**Members:** Mindy Harris-Wade (Chairperson), Robin Coyer, Leroy Ford, Anne Melfo, Pat Rehm, and Susan Snyder

Throughout 2021, BUCC's students received weekly care packages containing lessons and crafts. These were either mailed or hand-delivered by Mindy Harris-Wade (our early elementary teacher) and her ever helpful partner, Jesse Wade. Some of the older kids chose to forgo these weekly lessons, but for holidays and special occasions, gifts were

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# Annual Report for 2021

## Christian Education (continued)

delivered to all BUCC's young people, regardless of age. Mindy made it a priority to stay in touch with her students, so they would always know that they have a church community supporting them.

As the COVID vaccine wasn't available to young children until the fall, Mindy's outreach continued despite BUCC's reopening in June. From late October through the month of December, we saw the gradual return of some of our students. For those who haven't returned, she's still making deliveries. For the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row, Mindy has graciously agreed to serve as chair of the CE ministry in 2022.

## Communication & Outreach

Submitted by Jim Duffy

**Members:** Jim Duffy (Chairperson), Paul Kuzmins, Ben Rehling, David Ritchey, Valerie Tyler, and Tim Wallis

In 2021, as with 2020, we lost some of our primary methods of communicating among ourselves and our community. We could no longer meet, in person, at church on Sundays. Nor could we invite the community inside. So, as a congregation, we continued our adaptations:

- We continued our worship services via Zoom.
- The website, <https://Brecksvilleucc.org>, was reorganized to make the opening page more exciting and inviting. We also moved the important content, promoting our virtual worship services and events, closer to the "front" of the site. We also improved how the site looks when viewed on mobile devices.
- We continued to post Zoom recordings of our worship services on Facebook for all to see. We also posted links for them on the website
- We continued to use our Facebook group (for our members) and our Facebook Page (for everyone) to communicate news and events.

In June, things improved enough that we could assemble in the sanctuary:

- Through the generous support of the Duncan Memorial fund, Tim Wallis was able to put together a four-camera video broadcasting platform to live-stream our worship services.
- We setup a YouTube Channel, [Brecksville United Church of Christ](#), which automatically archives and makes available each week's service.
- Tim did a marvelous job of perfecting the approach over the first month.
- Tim trained additional people to run the Sound/Streaming operation each Sunday, so the job is split among 4 teams.

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# Annual Report for 2021

## Communication & Outreach (continued)

- We put together the viewing training materials to be sent via email and the Pillar.
- About 6-10 homes view our live-stream each week.
- Another 10-20 people view the recordings during the next week.
- Two services (Jun-11 and Nov-7) had the maximum number of views at 58.
- 20 people viewed our Christmas Eve recording later in the week.
- We also provided video streaming for a memorial service, which was viewed 56 times.

To reach out beyond our walls, we helped to promote two “community outreach” events: February’s “Friday Fish Meal,” which was catered by students from Tri-C’s culinary department and the “Holiday Last Minute Mart” in December.

## Facilities

Submitted by Cliff Cribbs

**Members:** Cliff Cribbs and Doug Fawcett (Co-Chairs), Tim Wallis, Marge Culver, Dan Stewart, and James Tyler

NJM Landscaping was contracted at \$50.00 per week to provide lawn service. Blue Sky Gardening was contracted to maintain the flower beds.

The extra space in the educational wing was rented by Make a Wish and new 2-year lease was negotiated with Make a Wish at the rate of \$1200 per month.

Cameras, wiring, etc. were installed to enable us to live stream our Sunday services on You Tube.

Three air conditioner units were replaced at a cost of \$14,000. Member contributions to the air conditioner fund have reached over \$11,000.

The Arlington house has a new renter. The rent has been increased from \$800 per month to \$850. A dehumidifier was purchased for the basement of the Arlington house to prevent mold issues. The cost was approximately \$200.

Our elevator maintenance company has been changed from Gable to Davis and Newcomer. The fire alarm system was inspected, and new batteries will be installed by Protegis Fire and Safety.

Thank you to everyone who served on the Facilities Ministry this year.

## Finance

Submitted by William Witt

**Members:** William Witt (Chairperson), Wes Novak, Bruce McCain, Nancy Stella, Joy Garapic, and Nora Gagliano

Finance, along with the other various ministries comprising Council, have taken the task of working on activities that help BUCC grow and thrive. With that objective in mind along with the eventual need to replace our Financial Secretary and provide remote access, Finance decided to focus on improving or replacing the data service provider known as ACS Technologies. Our goal was to streamline the information collection process. Examination started with the help of committee member Joy Garapic and Wes Novak who have voluntarily provided the Church's accounting function for decades.

1) With Wes' long-term relationship with ACS he volunteered to contact ACS and learn if a better level of service might exist. Over several months of discussion and the Church's long-term tenure with the company, they were able to offer a web-based format that enhance both function, privacy, and remote access. The upgrade package includes accounts payable, check writing and remote access allowing Wes to work off site. Further, ACS waived the setup fee and lowered the monthly charge considerably.

2) Earlier in the year, Heidi Spangler had set up an online software program called Breeze, to better manage BUCC's membership, directory, communication, and volunteer efforts. Breeze is currently used by over 7,000 churches nationwide, has a strong reputation, and met our needs at a reasonable price. Breeze also comes with a pledge processing feature that is available at no additional cost.

3) With Council's approval, BUCC converted processes to using the upgraded ACH software for general expense processing and the newly implemented Breeze program to track membership, pledges, and volunteer time. This could be done at no additional cost to BUCC. In September 2021, Breeze was purchased by Tithely, a global leader in church technology. No changes have been made to the pricing or functionality of the program.

4) The desktop accounting and information systems attached to a cloud-based application is helping BUCC streamline the financial accounting system and reduce time and monetary expenditures.

Finance met in person once in May, July, and October, using a remote Zoom format. Attendees were me, Wes Novak, Bruce McCain, Nancy Stella, Joy Garapic and Nora Gagliano. A lot of effort and volunteer time went in this software transition, and I am confident to say the Church is incredibly grateful for their efforts

# Annual Report for 2021

## Leadership & Development

Submitted by Bridget Sproul

**Members:** Bridget Sproul (Chairperson), Evelyn Seager and Beth Rehling

This ministry did not meet in person in the beginning of the year and communicated by email and text until the fall. We brainstormed names and ideas for filling the officers, ministry chairpersons, and ministry members. Positions were filled and a completed list prepared for congregational approval in January 2022.

The Pastor Search Team which had been formed by this ministry has continued its work through the last couple of years. As 2021 came to an end, the team chose a candidate to be presented for approval in early 2022.

## Membership

Submitted by Kathy Smith

**Co-Chairs:** David Pastor and Kathy Smith

2021 saw a year of no activities for the Membership committee. We did call all members to check on them.

## Our Church's Wider Mission

Submitted by Kate Klonowski

**Members:** Kate Klonowski and Chad Sproul (Co-Chairs), Julie Bernard, Linda Kriynovich, Jon Thompson, Kim Wallis, and Matt Wolbert

### Collections

March 14: One Great Hour of Sharing - \$150

May 9 (Mother's Day): Edna House – \$265 and 12 bags of clothing donated

May 23: Strengthen the Church - \$100

October 3: Neighbors in Need - \$100

Dec. 19: Christmas Fund - \$250

### Hunger Meals

January 24, 2021 @ Pearl Road UMC (approximately 24 meals served)

April 4, 2021 (Easter Sunday) @ Iglesia Emmanuel (approximately 10 meals served)

August 22, 2021 @ Pearl Road UMC (approximately 35 meals served)

November 7, 2021 @ Iglesia Emmanuel (approximately 15 meals served)

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# Annual Report for 2021

## Our Church's Wider Mission (continued)

### Social Justice Book Club

This past year we completed discussions on five books: ***White Fragility: Why it's so Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*** by Robin Diangelo; ***The Uninhabitable Earth*** by David Wallace-Wells; ***Love is the Way: Holding onto Hope in Troubling Times*** by Bishop Michael Curry; ***Dear America, Notes from an Undocumented Citizen*** by Jose Antonio Vargas; and ***Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women that a Movement Forgot*** by Mikki Kendall. We completed our last meeting on August 12 with an open offer for someone to pick it up again now that we are back to in-person worship. Pastor Allan led a movie night, **The End of the Affair**, on December 13<sup>th</sup>, as an Amazon watch party.

### Sock it to Me Sunday

This effort was initiated and led by Elizabeth Gadus, an ex officio member of OCWM. During the colder months, socks were collected for those in need and delivered to various shelters around the city of Cleveland the last Sunday of every month.

### The Giving Tree

This is our annual effort to add some holiday cheer to the students at PEP Prentiss Autism Center school. The church collected \$678 toward gifts for 15 students. Each student received all 2-3 items from their wish lists. They were purchased and wrapped by OCWM members and delivered by principal (and parishioner) Darlene Kelley.

### Last-Minute Mart (Benefitting The Refugee Response)

Heidi Spangler, Kathleen Stewart, and Kate Klonowski organized a Holiday Last Minute Mart vendor event, which was held on December 18<sup>th</sup> in Pilgrim Hall. Table fees of \$25 and donated raffle prizes from vendors raised a total of \$659 for The Refugee Response.

## Pastor Search Committee

Submitted by Sherrill Witt

**Members:** Sherrill Witt & Cliff Cribbs (Co-chairs), Joy Garapic, Allan Klonowski, Beth Rehling, Ben Rehling and Jon Thompson

After a search which lasted over two years, and after reviewing 19 excellent profiles, the Pastor Search Committee presented Reverend John D. King for the position of Settled Pastor on the weekend of January 9<sup>th</sup>. The BUCC Congregation gave their nearly unanimous vote for the call, and we are delighted to now have Rev. King as our new leader. His enthusiasm, exemplary personal background and religious experience, and his love for Brecksville UCC makes his new position a "homecoming" for John as he has always wanted to lead our church. His profound respect for what we have always stood for as a church community was a large factor in his decision to accept our call. We are so pleased to have him as he takes us forward to a new and exciting future as the world begins to re-open and our many programs can resume. Welcome, John!

## Spiritual Life

Submitted by Sue Maier

**Members:** Sue Maier and Betsey Wilson (Co-Chairs), Allison Colbert, Anne Melfo, Evelyn Seager, Sue Stenzel, and Dave Debick

In 2021 Spiritual Life was focused on return to in-person worship which started in June. We updated the description of the roles for the various service 'jobs' and assisted with the transition to volunteering through Breeze vs. being 'voluntold'. Spiritual Life also took over management of coffee hour after the services. We did not spend any of our budget this year.

## Staff/Congregation Relations

Submitted by Evie Novak

**Members:** Evie Novak (Chairperson), Cliff Cribbs, Marge Culver, and Mike Westerberg

2021 was another busy year for the ministry. Over the past two years, we have worked diligently to establish a professional work environment for our valued staff. Our focus this year was in four primary areas:

### Annual Employment Reviews:

In the later part of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021, we designed Annual Employment Reviews for the positions of Pastor, Office Manager, Nursery and Director of Music. The Annual Reviews contain four sections. Sections I and II are self-evaluations completed by each employee. The Staff Congregation Relations ministry completes Sections III and IV of the Pastor's Annual Review. The Pastor completes Sections III and IV of all other employee's reviews.

In 2021, all staff Annual Employment Review forms were given to Pastor Allan in mid-February for distribution to staff. We asked Allan to provide us with his self-evaluation (Sections I and II) by September 1 and to provide us with all other completed staff evaluations by October 31.

All staff reviews were completed by October 31. They were not only used as a way to obtain feedback from and provide feedback to the staff but were also used in providing compensation recommendations for the following year.

In 2022, we hope to solicit more involvement from church members in the review process.

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# Annual Report for 2021

## **Staff/Congregation Relations (continued)**

### **Staff Meetings:**

Our goal is to meet with each staff member at least two times per year. In the first half of the year, we met to review the staff's job descriptions, goals, and concerns. At the end of the year, we met to review their Annual Employment Review results and compensation. Those meetings occurred on the following dates:

Allan Lane – 4/20/21 & 12/1/21  
David Debick – 3/15/21 & 11/14/21  
Anne Melfo – 2/25/21 & 11/28/21

### **Employee Handbook Revisions:**

In the second half of 2021 we reviewed and updated the document formerly known as the Personnel Policies and Practices Manual. Council approved the revisions in our November meeting and the Revised Employee Handbooks were distributed to staff that same month.

### **Personnel:**

- Reviewed monthly time sheets, vacation & sick time requests submitted by Anne Melfo, Office Manager. We also conducted an analysis of her 2020-2021 work hours for budgeting purposes.
- Renewals of the Interim Minister Covenant with Allan Lane
- Enlisted the Communications Ministry to review the phone system and email accounts. It was decided we would keep the current system but changed the email accounts to Gmail.
- Ensured that the 2020 Annual Congregational Report was completed and distributed to members.
- We addressed two member-staff concerns.
- Developed Church policy relative to email blasts
- Approved requests from David Debick for six choral conducting classes as part of his professional development expectations.
- We considered and discussed with Council the timing for hiring a new Nursery worker.
- Considered and submitted to Council staffing budget proposals for 2022.

## Stewardship

Submitted by Bridget Sproul

**Members:** Bridget Sproul (Chairperson), Leroy Ford, Carol Miller, Pat Rehm, Jon Thompson, Matt Wolbert, Bridget Sproul, and Heidi Spangler

Bridget Sproul joined the Stewardship Ministry and took on the role of chairperson this year. She and Pastor Allan enrolled in an online 6 session seminar titled "Cultivating Generous Congregations." The goal of the course is to explore the faith and giving connection. The seminar was offered by the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving and hosted by the Damascus Project Network. The seminar was highly informative and included the following ideas:

- Moving congregations from a scarcity to an abundance mindset
  - Stewardship IS discipleship
  - Money follows mission: be clear about mission, then people will give
  - The more friends people have in the church, the more money they give
  - Fundraising is about relationships and community interconnection
  - The more a church talks and teaches about giving, the more people give to the church. Must normalize talking about money in church.
  - Have weekly or monthly mission moment movies about money and why we give.
- There were a few of these, but members were shy about speaking

Discussions occurred about financial software and the need to have an online program for members and finances. Eventually Breeze was chosen, and member information was entered. The program is used to communicate and to schedule events like the Lenten Fish Fry, as well as signing up for Sunday Worship responsibilities.

Over the summer, materials were chosen and ordered for the fall Stewardship campaign titled Rooted In Love. As Moderator, Heidi Spangler wrote the cover letter and we sent out the letter and pledge cards to the congregation at the end of October. Bridget Sproul, Bill and Sherrill Witt, and Heidi Spangler spoke during Sunday services in November about what BUCC means to them and why they give to the church. November 21 was Stewardship Sunday when pledges are turned in during the service. After the service we had our Rooted In Love Fest to celebrate and to encourage members to join ministries. Heart-shaped breads, snacks, and root beer floats were served. (This was the first time we met in Pilgrim Hall since the pandemic closed the church in March 2020.)

# Annual Report for 2021

## **Treasurer**

Submitted by Bruce McCain

Although in-person worship services resumed, 2021 was still a transitional year in terms of the financial results. Financially, that means results were more favorable than they otherwise might have been.

BUCC can be particularly grateful for the steadfast financial support of the congregation. Throughout the pandemic, the pledges and other forms of financial gifting to the church have shown no signs of the disruption the pandemic caused to the worship services and other programs of the church. Beyond the faithfulness of the core supporters, BUCC was also blessed by sizeable, unexpected donations and by special contributions of a little over \$11,000 toward the \$14,000 air conditioning repair.

On the expense side, the church's operating expenses typically are less than what the Finance Committee projects based on the spending estimates of the people who oversee specific church operations. Planned expenditures may not occur and allowances for ongoing repairs and other expenses are not always fully utilized. This year, pandemic limitations also lowered expenditures. Reduced use of janitorial services and snow removal lowered maintenance and repair expenditures by roughly \$5,500 (through November), while the special contributions for air conditioning repair held total outlays for total maintenance and repairs roughly \$10,000 below the estimate for the year.

The church can and should celebrate the favorable financial results in 2021. At the same time, we must recognize that "favorable" means the annual deficit was simply not as large as it might have been. Total contributions and other revenues are still not covering operating expenses. Unfortunately, the "normalized" gap seems sizeable. A healthy level of reserves gives BUCC time to meet the challenge, but it is important to realize that longer-term finances remain a concern.